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Insights into the lived experiences of so-called future leaders of historically white institutional evaluation processes

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Background

- Our discussion focuses on the participants' perceptions of *the relationship* between **institutional evaluation processes** of their development/ performance, and the conditions these created to constrain/ enable the potential of these future leaders, to effect substantive transformation of the institutional culture.
- In the traditions of critical scholarship, such as CRT, but where it is less about the subjective experience of oppression, or the identity claims of the subject, and more understanding (and uncovering) the mechanisms and structures of domination (Spivak).

National context – Quality assurance in South African HE

- Variable quality across institutions
- Quality assurance linked with transformation

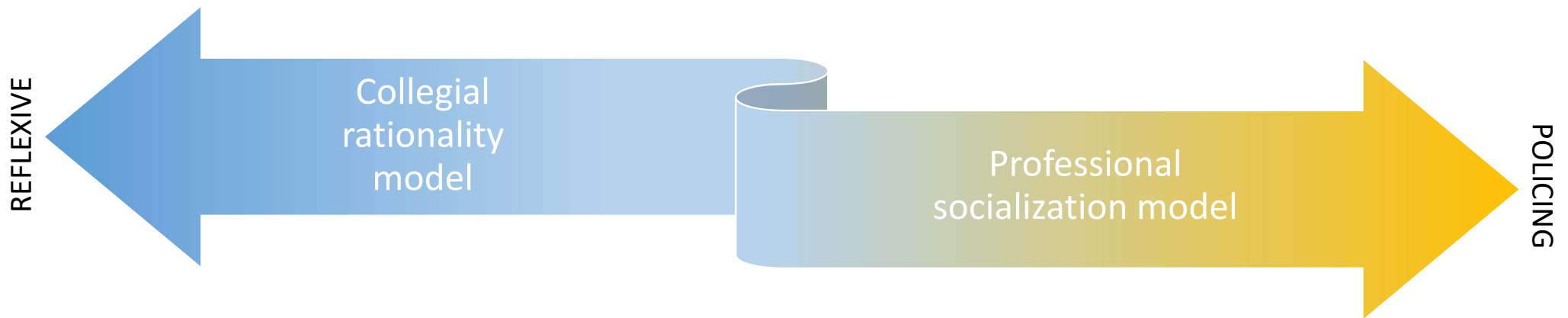
“a comprehensive transformation of higher education was required, marking a fundamental departure from the socio-political foundations of the previous regime” (CHE 2004, p.230).
- Top-down QA approach

to re-construct the concepts of “equity and redress, understood not only as a numbers game, but also as a complex educational matter in the transformation of institutional cultures and on the repositioning of institutions within the higher education system” (Lange 2008, p.1).

National approach self-regulatory: Institutional variations encouraged in relation to their mission & vision

- HEQC emphasis on 'quality promotion' as reflective, scholarly, innovative.
 - Emphasis on self-evaluation & development rather than external policing or punitive measures.
- In the case studied, what was utilized for the in-group of academics deviated from the approach to evaluation for the EA recipients.
- Our findings showed a conflict between the discourses of transformation and the practices of quality assurance.

Institutional evaluation approaches at odds with transformation discourses



Mainstream academics 'in group'	EA Programme Recipients 'out group'
Academic positioned as reflective practitioner, best placed as the agent of change within his/her practice	Recipient positioned as deficit but with talent/ potential apprentice to in-group identity and behaviour
Responsibility & ownership rests with individual academic	Responsibility & ownership rests with manager, mentor and EA programme co-ordinator
Developmental ethos of enlightening academic staff through critical, scholarly processes, which empower them to improve or transform their practice towards enhancing quality (Lockett 2006)	Development ethos in principle coupled with high frequency surveillance, interference and bureaucracy, towards pre-determined and teleological goal
Horizontal peer review of academic's scholarly reflective portfolios; academic argues his/her position to quality indicators	Vertical peer review in relation to performance management criteria, towards portfolios demonstrating quality to areas of perceived deficit
Common to HWI who resisted external interference to academic freedom	'Access and success' model transferred from student educational development for equity
paradox - espoused approaches to transformation which, when coupled with an evaluation model of academic freedom, effectively discounts accountability in relation to transformation (Kotta 2011)	Paradox – espoused discourses of recipients as agents of transformation, when couple with this evaluation model, effectively discounts agency

Why problematic in this context?

- Post-conflict
- Enduring legacies of inequality

South African equity – student

57,169,305 pop

Racial Categories in SA	Percentage (2011 consensus)	Numerical value
Black Africans	79.2%	41 million
Coloured	8.9%	4.62 million
Indian or Asian	2.5%	1.29 million
White	8.9%	4.59 million

'black' students

14%

First generation students 78%

isiZulu 22.7%, isiXhosa 16%, Afrikaans 13.5%, English 9.6%, Sepedi 9.1%, Setswana 8%, Sesotho 7.6%, Xitsonga 4.5%, siSwati 2.5%, Tshivenda 2.4%, isiNdebele 2.1%.



South African equity – a staff issue

Racial Categories in SA	Percentage (2011 consensus)	Numerical value
Black Africans	79.2%	41 million
Coloured	8.9%	4.62 million
Indian or Asian	2.5%	1.29 million
‘white’ academics	9% 53.2%	4.59 million



The recipients of these EA programmes were explicitly positioned , in national discourses, as contributing.

“to the intellectual and academic decolonisation, de-racialisation and de-gendering of the inherited intellectual spaces of South Africa’s universities, and more generally, to re-orienting universities to serve, in accordance with their social purposes, new constitutional, economic and social needs and development challenges” (Higher Education of South Africa 2011, p. 11).

Discussion of narratives on access and equity

1. 'Window-dressing': Participants' reception of structural access

- 'First black' or 'only black' is often treated as a major achievement" (#4)
Willfully parading black staff in particular as "tokens" (#25) of transformation and "window dressing" (#14) of diversity.
- Conflict – benefits from ADP positioning but not signed up to its ends.
- Approach to access retained the historic legacy – white hegemony.
- Negative associations of affirmative action projected on participants.
Membership of EA programme "tantamount to 'labeling' which unintentionally creates a situation of having 'others' in the system" (#12)

2. Training the dog': Participants' reception of 'access for success'

- AD programmes –ensures support for decoding the habitus of the institution and quality control.
- Such models ensure “worker adaptation to the work environment [where].. reproduction of organizational norms engenders the most rewards” (Sulé, 2014, pp. 432–433).
- Benefits highlighted - “very fortunate” (#8) and “very lucky” (#7) for being ‘protected” and “shielded” (#8) by the program as a “safety net that not many emerging academics enjoy” (#8).
- Deficit positioning – locks recipients into subservience -“I ought to be grateful for even getting my foot in the door” (#19).

3. 'Chipping away at the rock face': Participants reception of the conditions for 'access to challenge'

- Diversity' and 'inclusion' in assimilationist models of access.
- What is the point of access to higher education, if not for substantive transformation?

When the individual is placed in an environment where transformation is an objective, and she is targeted as part of that process at the institution, the question about what is being transformed is further complicated (#17).

- Macro-level considerations of aggression discern access in relation to sociological theories of power, conflict and collective action (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983).
- Institutional culture as strongly replicating the macro-aggressions of its inherited, exclusionary, homogeneous past.

There is this implicit expectation that you will have to uphold the values that the university holds without critique in terms of what these values mean to me and how inclusive they are (#9).

Reiterating insights

- Educational development programmes – need to rethink educational concerns
- Participants' insights
 - hidden macro-curriculum in EA programmes
 - Tensions in purposes of e/quality
 - Tensions between top-down functionalist notions of evolutionary change and bottom-up conflict theory
- Individualistic hero narratives
 - detracts from examining the machinations of domination and systemic oppression
 - deligitimation of 'non-traditional' communities, their knowledge(s) and ways of being

Insights into the lived realities of institutionalized machinations of domination, reaffirm the nature of “settler narratives of linearity, progress, and mobility” (Patel 2016: 399).

Sticking point – FURTHER RESEARCH Collaboration?

Mechanisms which evaluate the 'quality' of staff in contexts with legacies of inequality and/or oppression

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